

## CLAIMS

### WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:
  - if a threshold is exceeded, selecting a program based on a criteria; and
  - lowering a quality level of the program, wherein the lowering further reduces an amount of storage consumed by the program.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting further comprises:
  - selecting the program based on a ranking of a category to which the program belongs.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting further comprises:
  - selecting the program based on whether the program previously had the quality level lowered.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting further comprises:
  - selecting the program based on an age of the program.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting further comprises:
  - selecting the program based on a difference between a current quality level of the program and a minimum quality level of the program.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting further comprises:
  - selecting the program based on the criteria and an importance of the criteria.
7. An apparatus comprising:
  - means for selecting a first program from a plurality of programs based on a ranking of a category to which the first program belongs if a threshold is exceeded; and

means for lowering a quality level of the first program, wherein the lowering further reduces an amount of storage consumed by the first program.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the means for selecting further comprises:

means for selecting the first program based on whether the first program previously had the quality level lowered.

9. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the means for selecting further comprises:

means for selecting the first program based on an age of the first program.

10. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the means for selecting further comprises:

means for selecting the first program based on a difference between a current quality level of the first program and a minimum quality level of the first program.

11. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the means for selecting further comprises:

means for selecting the first program from the plurality of programs wherein the lowering the quality level of the first program saves a largest amount of space in the storage among the plurality of programs.

12. A signal-bearing medium encoded with instructions, wherein the instructions when executed comprise:

if a threshold is exceeded, selecting a first program from a plurality of programs based on a ranking of a category to which the first program belongs and based on whether the first program previously had a quality level lowered; and

lowering the quality level of the first program, wherein the lowering further reduces an amount of storage consumed by the first program.

13. The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein the selecting further comprises:

selecting the first program based on an age of the first program.

14. The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein the selecting further comprises:  
selecting the first program based on a difference between a current quality level of the first program and a minimum quality level of the first program.

15. The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein the selecting further comprises:  
selecting the first program from the plurality of programs wherein the lowering the quality level of the first program saves a largest amount of space among the plurality of programs.

16. The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein the ranking comprises an initial quality level of the first program.

17. A digital video recorder comprising:  
a processor; and  
a memory encoded with instructions, wherein the instructions when executed on the processor comprise:  
if a threshold is exceeded, selecting a first program from a plurality of programs based on a ranking of a category to which the first program belongs, based on whether the first program previously had a quality level lowered, and based on an age of the first program, and  
lowering the quality level of the first program, wherein the lowering further reduces an amount of storage consumed by the first program.

18. The digital video recorder of claim 17, wherein the selecting further comprises:  
selecting the first program based on a difference between a current quality level of the first program and a minimum quality level of the first program.

19. The digital video recorder of claim 17, wherein the selecting further comprises:

selecting the first program from the plurality of programs wherein the lowering the quality level of the first program saves a largest amount of space among the plurality of programs.

20. The digital video recorder of claim 17, wherein the ranking comprises an initial quality level of the first program.

21. The digital video recorder of claim 17, wherein the instructions further comprise:  
marking the first program as having the quality level previously lowered.

22. A computer system comprising:  
a processor; and  
a memory encoded with instructions, wherein the instructions when executed on the processor comprise:

if a threshold is exceeded, selecting a first program from a plurality of programs based on a ranking of a category to which the first program belongs, based on whether the first program previously had a quality level lowered, based on an age of the first program, and based on a difference between a current quality level of the first program and a minimum quality level of the first program, and  
lowering the quality level of the first program, wherein the lowering further reduces an amount of storage consumed by the first program.

23. The computer system of claim 22, wherein the selecting further comprises:  
selecting the first program from the plurality of programs wherein the lowering the quality level of the first program saves a largest amount of space among the plurality of programs.

24. The computer system of claim 22, wherein the ranking comprises an initial quality level of the first program.

25. The computer system of claim 22, wherein the instructions further comprise:  
marking the first program as having the quality level previously lowered.